

A triumph of teamwork

A mix of colours and patterns has given this renovated house the character its owners wanted

PHOTOGRAPHY BRADLEY VAN DER STRAETEN



IN BRIEF

NAMES Ben and Anna Cave
AGES 41 and 37
LOCATION East London
TYPE OF PROPERTY Late Victorian semi-detached house
BEDROOMS 4
BATHROOMS 2, plus cloakroom
PROJECT STARTED November 2017
PROJECT FINISHED August 2018
EXTENSION SIZE 6sqm
EXTENSION COST £18,000

ABOVE AND LEFT To create a richly textured exterior, Ben and Anna invested in soft red-grey brick slips for the extension as a contrast with the yellow-black brick of the house and the terrace of herringbone-laid paving bricks



The architect designed exposed, instead of recessed, spotlights positioned in pairs, together with 1950s-inspired pendant lights



Designed, made and installed by Uncommon Projects, the wax-oiled and lacquered shelving rests on top of a grille that was an on-site solution for disguising radiators and a means of adding another layer of pattern to the scheme

The smooth-running success of the extension and renovation of this family home can be attributed to one thing: 'Finding the right people to work with is absolutely essential,' says Ben Cave, who lives in the updated property with his wife Anna and their three sons. 'The team we worked with were honest and very good at curbing our worst excesses,' he says of architects George Bradley and Claire Holton from Bradley van der Straeten (BVDS). The family's home is a late-Victorian semi-detached property near Epping Forest in East London. 'We invited several architects to consider the project, telling them our budget, materials we preferred and the flexible way that we wanted to use the first floor. Other projects that BVDS had done and the conversations we had gave us the confidence to trust them,' explains Ben.

It was the arrival of the couple's first child that prompted them to find a home bigger than the one-and-a-half-bedroom flat in London's Dalston they lived in. A tight budget and the rise in property prices encouraged the couple to widen their search further east, which led to them buying the house. 'It was in need of some work as it hadn't been updated for 40 years by the lovely lady who lived there,' explains Ben. Although their brief was quite open, Ben and Anna wanted a home that would look and feel playful, with eclectic colours and patterns. 'Also, the ground floor needed a better connection to the garden and the dining table was to be the hub of the house,' says Bradley. As the narrow kitchen had two small windows and lacked a good view or access to the garden, a redesign of the room was the first and most important step. »

Two concepts were drawn up by BVDS that opened out the space with different interior layouts. A third plan went a step further and enlarged the ground floor by extending outwards to one side – and this is the option that Ben and Anna chose. It required a straightforward planning application and offered the couple an additional six square metres of living space. 'We made the decision not to knock down walls and liked the idea of having rooms, particularly ones that can be used in different ways, with no set spaces for children and grown-ups,' says Ben.

Instead of building an extension across the full width of the back of the house, Bradley's brick structure is L-shaped, with the vertical stem of the L attached to the house while the horizontal arm faces onto the garden. The design provided an opportunity to rework the layout on the first floor, creating a study-music room, and a second bathroom in the process. A new, timber-framed glass window at the back of the house matches the extension glazing below.

'Texture was important, both inside and out,' says Bradley, referring to the pale red brick and brick slips that have been used to create a waffle effect on the extension's exterior. They contrast with a wraparound terrace of paving bricks laid in a herringbone pattern.

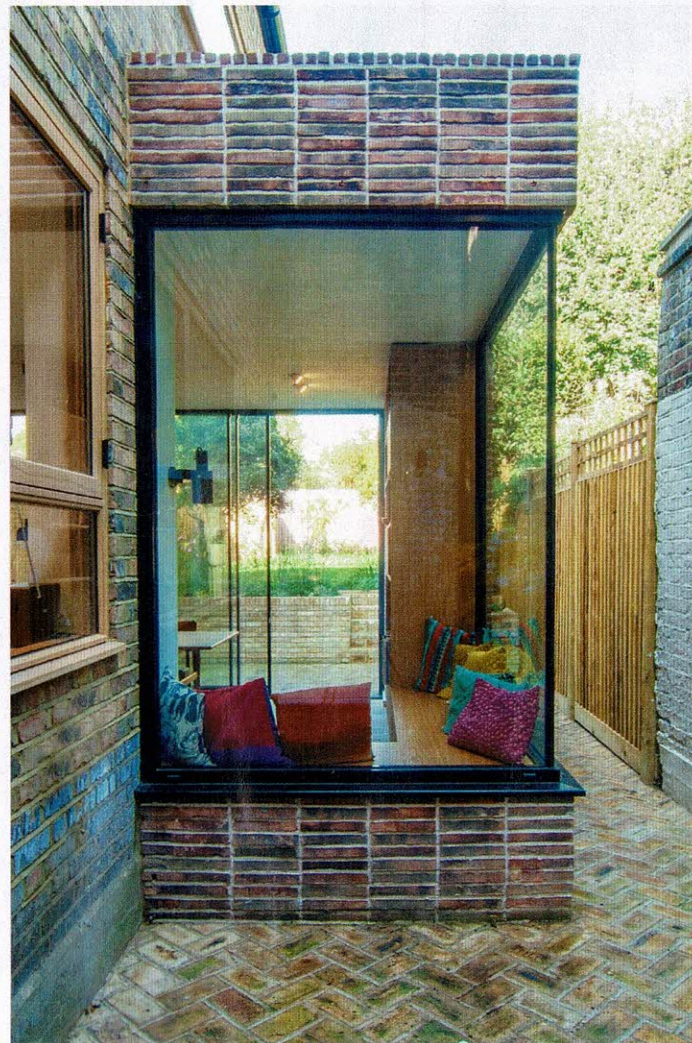
Inside, a vibrant yellow gives the sun-filled living room at the front of the house a wonderful sense of character. In the new kitchen, a combination of hard wax-oiled and colour-lacquered units, with bespoke-designed shelving and storage to match on the opposite wall, were designed and installed by Uncommon Projects. Altogether, the effect is a re-imagining of the 1950s, with cork, ply and colour.

'We're particularly keen on ply kitchens and were looking at options when we came across Uncommon Projects' design,' says Ben. 'There was a eureka moment when we walked into the kitchen belonging to one of the company's owners. We had to have one of our own.'

On the first floor, the new layout includes a corridor that runs from the stairwell to the study-music room



ABOVE The original, classic-design French door was retained and forms a focal point visible from the garden and through the oak fixed-frame window seat



ABOVE Contemporary, dark, slim-framed corner windows contrast with the traditional brickwork and pavers. Above, rainwater run-off is captured by a sedum roof



'We liked the idea of rooms that can be used in different ways, with no set spaces for children and grown-ups'

that now stands above the dining area in the extension below. One side of the corridor is lined with bespoke, built-in storage, incorporating a utility space, with a walk-in shower opposite, while the position of the bedroom at the front of the house was left unaltered.

The study-music room, with its wooden, wall-mounted desk spanning the full width of the room, is simply decorated so it can be used by any of the family to play keyboards, drums and guitars, or to

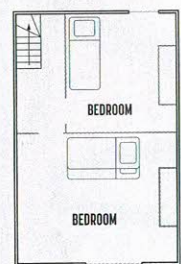
study. In contrast, Ben and Anna's new en-suite bathroom is boldly colourful. 'We particularly liked a banana-leaf print that we'd seen in America, as well as the more playful aspect of Scandinavian furniture, and we've brought the two styles together,' Ben states.

The couple are still surprised by the amount of work that was involved in the project but enjoyed the creative process.

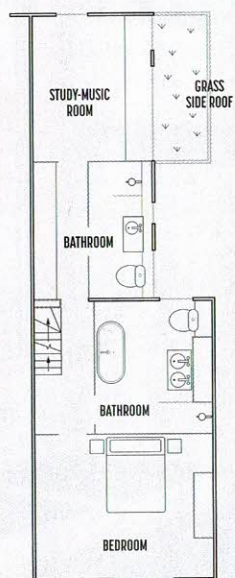
'Our approach was, "How can we make the house better for us?"' says Ben. 'It was a co-operative experience from beginning to end and now that it's finished, we realise that the quality of the work has given us a zero tolerance for other less well-designed places. The house is warm and comfortable and we love that we've chosen everything ourselves. This is a great part of London, with a lovely sense of community and the countryside is on our doorstep. We want our boys to grow up here.' GD

The lacquered hardwood-veneered plywood units were made bespoke, the rich tone adds colour to the pale wood scheme

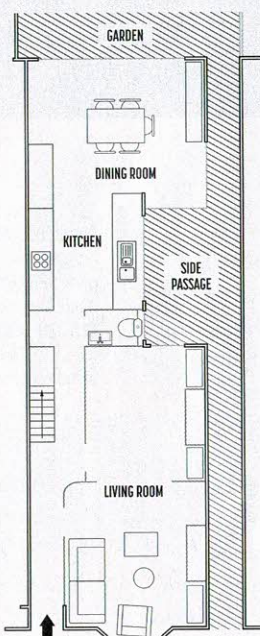
FLOOR PLANS



LOFT



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



The living room is painted an eye-catching yellow called Mister David from Little Greene



A vintage Danish bureau was adapted to work as a vanity unit with the addition of a white slimline work surface and two countertop basins

Ben and Anna wanted a home that would look and feel playful, with eclectic colours and patterns



The traditional bath was painted in a bold shade of yellow



A ply bunkbed by Made.com continues the Fifties-inspired theme in the older boys' bedroom

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SUPPLIERS

PROJECT TEAM
Architect and interior design consultant Bradley van der Straeten (07789 478 519; b-vds.co.uk)
Builder/contractor TBS Tutka (020 8200 2303; tbslimited.com)
Kitchen design Uncommon Projects (020 8617 1554; uncommonprojects.co.uk)
Garden design (excluding sedum roof) Martha Krempel Garden Design (07768 170 590; marthakrempelgardendesign.com)

STRUCTURE
Brickwork clay pavers Global Stone (0845 6060 240; globalstonepaving.co.uk)

Brick slip cladding The Bespoke Brick Company (01634 707 707; bespokebrick.com)
Sliding doors Maxlight (020 8896 0700; maxlight.co.uk)
Bespoke engineered timber flooring Bert & May (020 3744 0776; bertandmay.com)

FIXTURES & FITTINGS
Kitchen shelving and bench seat Uncommon Projects (020 8617 1554; uncommonprojects.co.uk)
Shower room basin Lusso Stone (020 3370 4057; lussostone.com)

Shower room wall tiles In Opera (020 3137 1086; in-opera.co.uk); Fired Earth (01295 812 088; fireearth.com)
Shower room floor tiles Diespeker & Co (020 7358 0160; diespeker.co.uk)

FURNITURE & ACCESSORIES
Bath Aston Matthews (020 7226 7220; astonmatthews.co.uk)
Main bathroom wallpaper Pierre Frey (pierrefrey.com)
Main bathroom pendant light Miguel Milá (miguelmila.com)
Main bathroom brass taps Aston Matthews (020 7226 7220; astonmatthews.co.uk)

Shower mixer Bert & May (020 3744 0776; bertandmay.com)
Bunk beds Made.com (made.com)
Pouffe SCP (020 7739 1869; scp.co.uk)
Living-room paint Little Greene (littlegreen.com)
Architrave and skirting Benjamin Moore (01753 575 756; benjaminmoorepaint.co.uk); Farrow & Ball (01202 876 141; farrow-ball.com)
Main bathroom wall paint Benjamin Moore (01753 575 756; benjaminmoorepaint.co.uk)
Bath paint Little Greene (littlegreen.com)
Children's room wall paint Little Greene (littlegreen.com)

ADDITIONAL EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY: JOCELYN LOW

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